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RIYADH, PLEASE PASS TO DHAHRAN; DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP

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SUBJECT: MOSQUE SERMONS FOR SAUDI ARABIA SEPTEMBER 28 AND
OCTOBER 5: AL-KHOBAR, MECCA, AND MEDINA.

Classified By: Acting Consul General CB Toney for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) BEGIN SUMMARY: In the Eastern Province on September 28, a substitute Imam at the al-Khobar Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal Mosque focused his sermon once again on Ramadan. He repeated his call for the congregation to read the Koran and stressed the importance of purifying oneself to prepare for the afterlife. On October 5, the substitute Imam remarked on alms giving and the Night of Power, and summarized the Grand Mufti's warning to Saudi Youth on the dangers of participating in jihad abroad.

12. (U) In Mecca on September 28 and October 5, the sermons comprised discussion of the importance of repentance and also warned youth against seeking jihad in neighboring countries. In Medina on September 28 and October 5, the sermons included calls for recitation of the Koran and additional prayer. END SUMMARY.

AL-KHOBAR

DEDICATION TO GOD AND SELF-PURIFICATION

13. (C) In the Eastern Province at the al-Khobar Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal Mosque on September 28, the substitute Imam started the sermon by reiterating his call for the congregation "To follow God's orders through daily recitations...of the Holy Koran and through acts of good.... He also emphasized that "...now is the time for good Muslims to do something about their life in the hereafter...." The substitute Imam directed his sermon toward smokers, drug users, and drinkers, saying that "Ramadan presents the best opportunity for man to purify himself of impurities and vice."

14. (C) On October 5, the substitute Imam stressed that the congregation should undertake additional prayers and that "... great rewards...await worshippers who dedicate their free time to prayers, recitation of the Holy Quran...." He also discussed the importance of alms giving (Zakat al-Fitr) toward the end of Ramadan.

15. (C) The substitute Imam continued, addressing the Night of Power (Laylat al-Qadr), which falls somewhere during the last 10 days of October. He said that the Koran describes it "...as equal to a thousand months, translating to 83 years

and some months." He added "...it is the night when the Heavens and the skies open briefly to reveal what's inside to the eyes of the most fortunate of human beings, the most pious of worshippers."

WARNS YOUTH AGAINST JOINING JIHAD ABROAD

¶6. (C) During the second part of the sermon, the substitute Imam read a brief summary of the Grand Mufti's October 1 written warning to Saudi youth against the dangers of joining so-called jihad in neighboring countries.

MECCA

REPENTANCE AND SELF-REFLECTION

¶7. (U) In Mecca at the Holy Mosque on September 28, Sheikh Saud al-Shuraym focused on "repentance" and criticized "some people" for eating and "watching low movies and dubious drama series" during Ramadan. He continued "it is not strange for such people not to find in this blessed month what the faithful believers find in it."

¶8. (U) The following week on October 5, Sheikh Salih Bin-Humayd started the sermon by once again citing the importance of reviewing one's actions. However he cautioned that "...the review will not be serious or accurate unless the Muslim has a strong will and a true intention...." He added that this included an examination of the nation's youth, stating that what happened to the nation of Islam was the "Result of miscalculated actions and conducts,

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particularly by some youths." He argued that this was due to "...blind enthusiasm based on lack of knowledge and opinion and refusal to accept advice and to think about the consequences."

YOUTH EXPLOITED FOR POLITICAL GAIN

¶9. (U) Sheikh Salih Bin-Humayd reiterated the Grand Mufti's warning to youth to avoid participating in jihad abroad, stating "...His Eminence...warned against being carried away by whims and enthusiasm that is not governed by useful knowledge and wise opinion. He stressed that the situations there (in Iraq) are unsettled, the conditions uncertain, and the banners not clear." He added "...the one who incited these inexperienced young men and tempted them is either one who is ignorant of the true reality and was not really aware of the true situation, or one who knows the true reality and intends to inflict damage on this country and its people."

¶10. (U) The Imam continued on the same theme, stating that "...these young men have fallen easy prey to everyone who wanted to sow corruption on earth. They exploited their enthusiasm until they turned them into time bombs and mobile traps killing themselves so as to achieve political gains and to make them fuel for blazing conflicts and bridges for suspicious trends. These young men have become a tool in the hand of foreign apparatuses that manipulated them in the name of Jihad and are using them to achieve their ignominious aims...which are far removed from true religion...."

NOT ALL JIHAD IS LEGITIMATE

¶11. (U) The Sheikh stated that many gaps existed "...between legitimate jihad, its jurisprudence (fiqh), and sound implementation...." "These gaps," he added, "are exploited by groups that are hostile to Islam and its people in creating instability, spreading disturbances, causing divisions, sowing suspicions, leveling accusations, killing innocents, confusing positions, and causing estrangement among peoples and their governments and rulers." He concluded by stating that "...as a result of this, the ideas of takfir (holding other Muslims to be infidel) and killing

have become active even among members of the one family."

MEDINA

CALL TO RECITE THE KORAN AND TO PRAY

¶12. (U) In Medina at the Holy Mosque on September 28, Sheikh Salah al-Budayr also discussed the importance of worship and recitation of the Koran. On October 5, Sheikh Abd-al-Rahman al-Hudhayfi requested of the congregation that they recite "God's words" and perform prayer during the last 10 days of Ramadan.
TONEY